

While these premises make criticism of the "system" to a great extent impossible we nevertheless cannot agree with the principle. Such a stand is absolutely opposed to the modern views of classification, and we fail to see why we are better off in grouping together two species which are superficially alike when we know that they have sprung from very different stocks, and have converged through the action of similar necessities of life or environment. Even the popular student would, we think, prefer to know that a system reflected the actual phylogenetic relationship of the groups, even though he were unable to see similarities in a cursory examination of the species.

No linear arrangement such as is necessitated in a book can be truly accurate phylogenetically or "systematically" but we see no need for two arrangements and consider that the best "system" is a phylogenetic one.

Apart from the nature of the "System" the uniting of a number of families into several composite groups it seems to us serves no purpose, especially when the larger groups are put in different primary divisions; as the "Scansores" and "Insesores," of Dr. Reichenow's system. The reduction in the number of families is on the same line and we can see no advantage in uniting the *Phytotomidae* and *Cotingidae*; the *Tyrannidae*, *Pipridae* and *Oxyrhynchidae*; or in the grand amalgamation of *Timaliidae*, Wrens, Mockers, Thrushes and Old World Warblers under the family name of *Sylviidae*!

More misleading still is the disposition of some of the genera. The removal of *Vireosylva* from the *Virconidae* to the *Mniotiltidae* is certainly not due to any obvious external characters. And the appearance in the latter family of the genera *Rhodinocichla*, *Phanicoophilus*, and *Tachyphonus* is hardly less unfortunate, especially in the case of *Rhodinocichla* which Dr. Hubert Lyman Clarke has shown pretty conclusively to be Tanagra in its affinities. (Auk, 1913, p. 11.)

While, as said before, we can see no reason for a system such as Dr. Reichenow advocates, nevertheless if we adopt such a system, it would, it seems to us, have been more consistent to have carried it further and placed the swallows in the same group with the swifts, and to have recognized several other obvious cases of external resemblance.

However, no matter what system is adopted 'Die Vögel' fills a long-felt want in presenting the more important genera and species in a concise manner under each family as well as furnishing in a convenient form a vast amount of valuable information. It will thus take its place among the standard works of reference on the birds of the world — a broad field truly, but one which Dr. Reichenow is eminently fitted to cover.— W. S.

Second Report on the Food of Birds of Scotland.— In 1912 Miss Laura Florence published analyses of the contents of 616 stomachs of Scottish birds. Now a report¹ has appeared upon the continuation of that work. It includes analyses of 1390 stomachs representing 81 species.

¹ Trans. Highland and Agr. Soc. Scotland. Fifth Series, Vol. XXVI, 1914, pp. 1-74.

Some of the species most numerously represented are Starling, 107 stomachs, Rook, 288, and Black-headed Gull, 137. The results are given in numerical form and the identification of items is in most cases very definite. Summaries for the various species note the number of stomachs containing items of various economic groups.

The preface explains why no percentage system is used in the following passage quoted from Mr. C. F. Archbald: "it would be unwise to attempt to show the proportion in which the components of their food are consumed because individuals of the same species vary much according to opportunity and their own particular fancy. For this reason it would require records extending over several years, and including observations on an enormous number of birds from different localities, to enable us to draw any definite conclusions as to the proportionate amount of good and harm with which each species should be credited."

This is the theoretical opinion of one who has not given percentage methods a thorough trial. As a matter of fact even a moderate number of stomachs will give results as to proportions of principal items of food that will not materially be changed by doubling or trebling the number of stomachs. Moreover every economic investigation should aim at ultimate completeness, and it is just as well to do the earlier work in the style that must eventually be adopted for handling a large mass of data.

Among the general conclusions are the following: the Starling and the Rook are too numerous; the Herring Gull is spending more time inland and feeds extensively on grain; it and the Common Gull (*Larus canus*) should be left unprotected until their numbers have greatly decreased; the Black-headed Gull is beneficial.—W. L. M.

Feilden on Birds of Trinidad and Tobago.¹—This paper contains notes on 35 species; about 300 are known from these islands. Notes on the food of several species are included, though few of them are very definite. The most interesting annotation refers to the Oil-bird (*Steatornis caripensis*). It is as follows: "The food consists of fruit and berries. It is the only fruit-eating night bird. It feeds on the wing, picking off the fruit as it passes the tree. The stones of the fruit are subsequently ejected from the mouth. A species of palm *Thrinax argentea* growing in the Botanic gardens was visited nightly by these birds to the number of three or four as long as the tree remained in fruit. As the only known colonies of these birds are on the north coast of the island, it is probable that they made the long journey nightly in order to secure food. The Guacharo. . . is of economic value, the young becoming very fat when about a fortnight old. They are then collected and the fat melted down into a colorless oil which is used for purposes of cooking and illumination" (pp. 31-32). With all the modern methods of producing light, it would seem the Oil-bird might be excused from serving as a substitute.—W. L. M.

¹ Feilden, G. St. Clair, Notes on some birds of Trinidad and Tobago. Bull. Dept. Agr. Trinidad and Tobago, Vol. xiii, Jan. 1914, pp. 25-33.